

Lincoln Park Neighborhood Plan Advisory Group
Summary Meeting minutes
February 4, 2003

Members present: Merion Green, Fran Hawkins, Berneice Howard, Anita Summerour, Geraldine Evans Wilson

Interested Parties: Obie Addison, Bess Corbin, Earl Moore, Anita Neal, Reginald Yirenkyi

Staff: Randy Clay, Larry Marcus, Phil McLaughlin, Jim Wasilak

Opening Remarks/Administrative Items

Jim Wasilak announced the Chairman Tolu Odunlami would not be attending. Jim introduced Larry Marcus, the City's Chief of Traffic and Transportation, and Phil McLaughlin, with Montgomery County Department of Public Works and Transportation's Ride-On service. They are present to hear the issues of concern from the community, with the hope that the meeting can be informative as well. Jim distributed the minutes from the January 28 meeting, and asked for comments to be brought back to the next meeting, and asked that the Group discuss its schedule after the discussion on transportation. Berneice Howard reminded the Group about comments on the draft Historic Preservation chapter that was previously distributed.

Discussion of Ride-On Issues

Larry stated that his division is responsible for everything that is a City-owned, transportation-related facility. He asked that the Group discuss issues with Phil of Ride-On so that he could leave the meeting early. Phil, the manager of Operations Planning, introduced himself and stated that he is responsible for route planning and scheduling, bus stops, data collection and ridership estimation for Ride-On. He noted that the staff is fairly small and offered to take back any concerns to the appropriate person. He described Doug Duncan's Go Montgomery plan, which is a ten-year transportation plan. Forty-seven percent of the Plan is dedicated to enhancing transit opportunities, such as increasing the frequency of transit and expanding the time of transit operations. The routes that have the greatest overcrowding will be addressed first.

Berneice added that Ride-On was a great service to the County, and that the schedules should be distributed, especially at the community center. Larry also pointed out that the City wants to link its web site to the Ride-On website, and Phil added that Ride-On's telephone information center is also available. Bess Corbin asked whether there could be smaller buses to serve the area, as it seems like they are never full when the buses come through. Phil added that the buses that serve the area are probably 35 to 40 feet long, compared to the 25-foot small buses. Route 59 is one of the most successful routes in the system, while Route 48 is one of the system's fastest maturing routes in terms of ridership growth. The smaller buses hold 23 seated passengers and 5 or 6 standing riders. Anita Summerour asked about whether there were plans for quieter buses, and Phil responded that the yellow and green buses that run on CNG would replace some existing buses as part of Go Montgomery. Anita expressed concern about a bus that speeds in the neighborhood and drives through the stop sign. It was reported that a police officer has issued a

warning to one of the drivers of the 59 bus to obey the traffic laws. Phil promised to take this back to his office, and asked residents to note information such as the bus and time of day when these are reported. Geraldine Evans Wilson expressed her concern about aggressive drivers that tailgate, and also asked about drivers' double punching tickets for her grandsons that use the 20-trip passes for school. Complaints have been made to the offices.

Berneice asked if rider counts are kept every day, and Phil responded yes. The system carries 75,000 riders per day, with Metro carrying an additional 50,000 riders. Most trips are \$1.10 per trip during peak hours, and \$.90 for off-peak. There are senior citizen discounts as well. Berneice asked how much of the operating costs are covered by fares, and Phil responded that only 20 percent is covered, with the remainder being subsidized evenly between the State and County. Metrorail covers about 75 percent of its operating costs. Some Ride-On service is commuter based, with routes inbound in the morning and outbound in the evening.

Anita mentioned that the bus shelter near the intersection of First and Taft Streets needs to be cleaned up, and noted a stop on North Horners Lane near Southlawn Lane that is frequently littered. Phil pointed out that Ride-On maintains the shelters but not stops, which are offered to groups for adoption. Phil mentioned that the Go Montgomery program will add amenities to the stops and shelters. Ultimately one-half of the 6,800 stops will have shelters, with some stops getting benches. Bess Corbin asked if there is a problem with loitering between stops and shelters, which the response was that there is not much data to support either way. Fran Hawkins asked about buses that cut-through the neighborhood that are out of service. Phil was not sure whether the streets in the neighborhood were categorized as non-routing for out-of-service buses. Anita praised the drivers for dropping off seniors and the handicapped at non-bus stops, although Phil pointed out that bus drivers should stop only at marked stops for safety purposes. Larry pointed out that one thing that is happening is that the stop locations are being reevaluated, and Ride-On is looking at moving stops that require mid-block crossings.

Phil explained the student pass, which allows students to ride free between 2 and 7 p.m. High school students must show ID. If approved as part of Go Montgomery, students will ride free all the time as a way to encourage transit use at an early age. On Code-red days, Ride-on and Metrobus is free to encourage use of cars. Phil reported that there is about a 6 percent spike in ridership on these days. Phil noted that there is a regional flash pass available for \$2.50. Geraldine questioned whether the expanded student pass could be approved, given the budget deficit. The web site for Ride-On is rideonbus.com, and the phone number is 240-777-RIDE (7433). One resident pointed out that there is too much space between stops on Frederick Avenue. Anita noted that one stop was previously requested to be moved.

Discussion of Transportation Issues

Larry pointed out that some items that may be missing, such as lighting or a sidewalk, can be brought to his attention. Merion Green pointed out that the traffic on North Horners Lane that comes over the hill near Mt. Calvary Church toward Lincoln Avenue moves too fast, making it difficult for pedestrians to cross. Larry noted that there should be some device every three to five hundred feet to aid pedestrian crossing, but this may not necessarily be a traffic signal. A

traffic count would determine whether a signal is warranted, as signals should not be installed indiscriminately. Merion and Geraldine suggested that there should be a crossing guard on North Horners Lane at Lincoln Avenue, while Larry said that there may be an opportunity to narrow the travel lanes on North Horners to allow pedestrians to cross safely at that location. There could be narrowed travel lanes with a raised crosswalk and signage, which is more attractive than a speed hump. Berneice pointed out that this could prevent some of the trucks coming through. Larry said that this can also highlight the area for pedestrian safety. Merion remained opposed to the concept, in part due to maintenance concerns. Larry noted that there is an opportunity to do this neighborhood first. A problem was noted with speeding on Douglas Avenue.

Reggie Yirenyi asked about when Johnson Drive would be paved. Larry responded that this is being put into the budget. Anita suggested that the street should be restricted to residents only, similar to some service drives which are signed for resident use only. Some Johnson Drive residents have even experienced park patrons parking their driveways. The road should be paved and should have restricted parking such as permit parking, which was the consensus of the Group. Anita stated that Johnson Drive should not go through another winter without being paved. If residents initiate the permit parking, this should solve one of the problems. Anita suggested that the permit fee should be waived because the residents are living on a substandard street.

One resident noted that the signal timing for pedestrians on MD 355 at Park Road is not big enough, and Larry responded that the City has requested that the County increase the timing for several years. Anita pointed out that there are signals that provide a countdown for pedestrians to help pedestrian crossing. Fran noted that frequently there is traffic on Lincoln Avenue trying to get out on North Horners Lane, and Larry responded that there can be balance between adding a signal or stop signs but this would be determined by the neighborhood. Larry stated that he would have someone study this intersection, including new traffic counts.

Anita questioned whether there should be additional painted crosswalks. Larry stated that the City is studying pedestrian access to Town Center, and asked the Group to determine where on North Horners Lane there should be improvements. Merion replied that there should be something at Lincoln Avenue and North Horners Lane. Fran suggested that there should be something to slow down cars coming over the hill in front of Mt. Calvary Church toward Lincoln Avenue. Larry stated that he would pursue something in this location. Larry emphasized that with the spacing of various calming devices at 400 to 600 feet, drivers can never gather speed. There may be an opportunity to install a permanent speed indicator on North Horners Lane, although Merion thought that the portable sign would be sufficient.

Anita asked about the parking lot entrances on Middle Lane and whether this will change. Larry responded that the Plan is to add turning lanes and to shift the street to the north to allow additional sidewalk space. He is also looking to eliminating the left turn prohibition from Middle Lane onto Rockville Pike. Fran expressed a concern about the crosswalks, in which pedestrians assume that drivers see them and sometimes cause small collisions. Berneice stated that it seems that some pedestrians don't pay attention to vehicles. Larry added that awareness is

important for both drivers and pedestrians, and that alternatives to the car can be made more accessible. He pointed out that there is a suggestion area on the City's transportation web site., and residents can call 240-314-8500 to report lights that are out in the City.

Larry suggested that there should be someone from the community to address the Mayor and Council during budget sessions to ensure that funds get appropriated for improvements on North Horners Lane. This will help make the improvements happen. Larry thanked the Group for inviting him, and hoped that there could be more meetings in the future.

Next Steps

Jim stated that the next meeting would be on Thursday, February 20 at the Lincoln Park Community Center to discuss public facilities.